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# Letter from Taizé

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THE MEETING IN LISBON

## The Portuguese People and Their Gift of Hospitality

Vasco da  
Gama,

*Oriente*: these names will become familiar to the participants in the European meeting in Lisbon. For some, they simply refer to a fifteenth-century navigator and a direction, the place where the sun rises. When you enter a bit more deeply into Portuguese culture, however, you understand better the importance of these words.

Vasco da Gama opened the sea-route from Europe to India, after a ten-month voyage. He plays such an important role in Portuguese history that his name was given to the longest bridge in Europe, seventeen kilometres long, that crosses the Tagus River in Lisbon. This bridge arrives in an area where you find the halls in which the times of prayer will be held during the meeting. It is a kind of image of the meeting: going far to meet others, leaving the comforts of dry land to create possibilities of sharing.

*Oriente*: this is not only a direction or the name of a metro station that serves the exhibition centre; it was the goal of many voyages that brought the Portuguese as far as China and Japan. What boldness, and what a sense of the universal inspired these explorers! A symbol in front of the ultramodern halls bears witness to this: the reconstruction of a church façade built in China at that time. Even before trade contacts, missionaries like Saint Francis Xavier opened new roads.

### Creating New Ties

For several months already, the parishes have been preparing for the meeting. The first gatherings have already brought together more than 500 young people from a hundred parishes of the region. Groups will be formed in almost 200 parishes. They will begin to spread the news to those around them, before the more active phase of the preparation begins, in the autumn, when host families will have to be found. Father Vitor

Gonçalves, the parish priest of Vila Franca de Xira, writes a meditation for the diocesan magazine each week. His reflection on the gospel for the sixth Sunday of Easter – “We will come to him, we will remain with him” John 14:23 – was entitled “Dreaming of December in May.” He wrote:

“During the month of May a few Taizé brothers visited us. All at once, we began to dream about that immense adventure of welcoming under our roofs



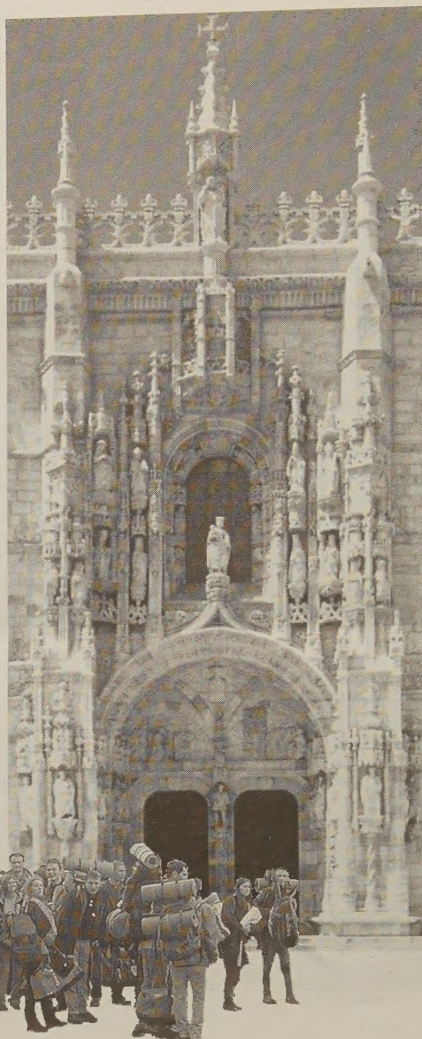
**Lisbon**  
**X Taizé**  
28 December 2004  
- 1 January 2005



several tens of thousands of young adults from Europe and elsewhere!

"I feel that Jesus is offering us a challenge today: to mobilize our communities – the young people, so generous by nature, the families, people able to offer hospitality in their homes, the entire city of Lisbon and its surroundings – so that together we can create new ties rooted in the joy of welcoming... Offering a simple welcome, beginning a dialogue, praying, renewing hope... for whoever closes themselves perishes!

"The poet Sebastião da Gama said that 'only dreaming makes us go forward'... It is now at our door! It is a December dream but has not waited to become visible! Let us break our routines, the barriers that separate 'practicing Christians' and 'the others'... So many people are already living the joy of hospitality! So many others would be impoverished if we did not count on them! Awakening the generosity of all and the best each person has to offer cannot be put off till later! Together let us dream this little miracle..."



## Prayer is the Respiration of Christians

Welcoming others is also an adventure that stimulates an inner searching. Throughout the time of preparation, there will be regular times of prayer in the parishes; in the city centre, there will even be a prayer each day. The songs that sustain the prayer have been recorded in Portuguese for the first time to make a CD. Some of the young people, like Marta from Alcanhões, explain how the upcoming meeting is linked to their personal journey:

"We do not know either the day or the hour when Jesus knocks on our door. I too do not know it, but to my surprise several times I realized that he called me in different ways. I have not always said 'yes'. For a few years of my life I even explicitly said 'no'. I left the Church. I knew times of joy, always felt together with anxiety on account of the fear that they would end. But at the same time, I also experienced the lacks of a society without God and the limitations of human beings. Anguish and disappointment took root in me.

"After a few years, I began to attend

the meetings of the youth group in my parish once more, then I participated more and more in the life of the Church, and finally became a religion teacher.

"After having taken part in Taizé meetings, I wanted to make part of my own life the acceptance of others and of myself that is so obvious in them. I gradually realized that it is possible to live this reality in our own situation when we pray. Prayer is the respiration of Christians.

"The news that the next European meeting will be in Lisbon filled us with joy. A joy that I cannot put aside. A joy that I wish to share and live with others. A joy that anticipates and reveals the existence of a God who always loves.

"This meeting is an opportunity to become acquainted with the roots of our local community and to discover the potential of the parishes. One characteristic of the Portuguese people is their capacity for hospitality, but the desire for a facile comfort that is becoming more and more widespread in our society jeopardizes this distinctive feature of ours. The European meeting will re-awaken in us this great gift we have been given.

"My parish, Alcanhões, numbers

about 1600 members and is less than an hour away from Lisbon. We want to take part in the meeting as best we can. The parish is already beginning to get organized so that together we can live this pilgrimage of trust."

## We Do Not Live Alone

Discovering the life of the Christians of Lisbon also means being attentive to the many initiatives of solidarity and mutual aid. For example, many are ready to give a few years to help countries like Angola, Mozambique or East Timor. Others support local initiatives in favour of the poorest of the poor, for instance the homeless. Rodrigo, a young teacher, talks about his commitment:

"We do not live alone. I only became convinced of this when I began really to look at others, when I came face to face with people who needed me. It was in December. I had begun to do volunteer work in a home for the elderly. It was run by the sisters of Mother Teresa. It was hard, very hard, to be with people who were isolated from this world, who were abandoned in the streets. It was the first time I was in contact with that type of person, especially men, who did not remember anything or anyone.

"When I decided to go, it was, I think, more for myself than for the others, to be more present in the world, to try and live in solidarity, to receive something myself. I admit it, it wasn't basically to give, but to receive, even if I could not define exactly what. And since I thought I would receive first of all, I repeat, it was very, very hard to stay.

"One day, I realized that, even if he did not know any longer who he was, one of the men there knew who I was. He saw that I was present, once a week, to visit him, to talk with him, to give him a little attention. He knew who I was and he looked into my eyes with a smile that in some sense disconcerted me. Even if he did not know it, he had learned to love me. Without realizing it, he had completely changed my way of thinking and acting in that home.

"In the sisters' spotlessly clean chapel, there is a crucifix, with these words written on the wall: 'I thirst.' I think it was there that I understood. In the depths of these elderly persons, inside that man, Christ was present. He was living in them, and he asked me, as he did 2000 years ago, to give them to drink. And he assured me that, even after all this time, he would not only keep asking me for help but also keep telling me that he was thirsting for me, for my presence, for my time, for my life. I was the one, in fact, who did not understand what I was doing. More than trying to receive, I realized that following Christ



meant giving, not just giving something but giving ourselves. We do not live alone and, in others, especially in the very poor, we always meet Christ himself."

## Preparations for the Meeting

Those who want to come to Lisbon for the meeting are asked to take part in all that is offered, showing particular attention to the host parishes and families, and with a spirit of openness to those who come from other countries. In every country, to allow participants to prepare together, meetings and prayers will be organized beginning in September.

To go forward with the preparation, the following questions can be reflected on either alone or in a group:

What leads me to set out towards other Christians who are far away? Am I also ready to take a similar step towards those who are nearby? With whom can I set out? Are there people around me who would be happy to take part in this stage of the "pilgrimage of trust," happy to have this kind of experience of the Church

and an experience of openness to others?

Can I take a time of silence periodically to examine my life, to pray simply by listening to God, and to see what consequences the "pilgrimage of trust" has in my daily life?

The starting- and end-point of the pilgrimage is the local community. How can we find ways from the very beginning of the preparation to deepen links with different groups and local Christian communities?

### Practical Details

Arrival: Tuesday morning, December 28th, 2004 between 7am and 12 noon.

Departure: Saturday afternoon (after 3:30pm), January 1st, 2005.

Programme: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the greater Lisbon area. A morning prayer will be held in each neighbourhood, followed by meetings in small groups with other participants and with local people. Each day – midday and evening – there will be two times of prayer together in large halls for all the participants. In the afternoon, workshops on various themes will be held.

Accommodation: either with families or in school and church halls. It is essential to bring a camping mat and sleeping-bag.

Travel: Something new this year is the need to organize the journey differently, since for many countries it will be much longer than usual. Many coaches will have to stop at least once on the way, so we are looking for parishes in the South of France and the North of Spain to welcome the young pilgrims for part of the night or day on Monday, December 27th as well as on Sunday January 2nd during the return trip.

For more details about the programme and the journey, check the website or contact Taizé.

### Meetings

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*This summer, during the international meetings in Taizé, new topics of reflection are proposed:*



**"From doubt to trusting." (How can we recognize God's presence in our life? The story of the two pilgrims to Emmaus is used as a basis for reflection and discussion.)**

**"To the wellsprings of joy: reflection on the Letter for 2004." (What gives me a breath of trust? What are the sources of kindness, joy and trust? What does God want from me? How can we live in communion with others?)**

**"Created in God's image." (Why is life so difficult and so beautiful? What does it mean to be a human being and what is our calling?), with a longer daily Bible introduction on Genesis chapters 1 to 4.**



What relationship with God is expressed by the words "to fear God"?

Different words are used to express a relationship with God. We can believe in God, love him, and serve him. Sometimes we hear the words "to fear God." This expression is hard to understand, but since it is not rare in the Bible, it is worth reading a few texts attentively in order to try and grasp their meaning better.

First of all, there is fear as a background of all religions. Manifestations of the divine generate strong emotions, at times even panic and terror. They both fascinate and frighten. There can be no encounter with the unexpected reality of God without a moment when we are unsettled. It was this way from the appearance of God on Mount Sinai down to the first Easter morning: the woman who came to the tomb "were afraid" (Mark 16:8). But in the Bible, in almost all cases, the emotions awakened by a manifestation of the divine are immediately followed by the words: "Do not be afraid." Religious fear or awe is not a value in itself. It is not meant to last, but should lead to confident trust.

In other contexts, fear of God is a lasting and not a transitory reality. "Fear of the Lord is pure, lasting for ever" (Psalm 19:10). The explanation of this unchanging fear is not to be found in a religious emotion, but in the political language of the time. Treaties of protection stipulated that those benefiting from this protection should fear and serve their protector faithfully. In God's covenant or pact with Israel, the same words express a faithful commitment to God: "What does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to follow all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul?" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Fearing, loving and serving God are all synonyms here. Fear of God is no longer an emotion but a stable attitude of faithfulness to the covenant.

In the psalms, fearing the Lord means "keeping his covenant and faithfully following his precepts" (Psalm 103:18). "Those who fear the Lord" form "the great assembly" of the faithful gathered together in the Temple to worship God (Psalm 22:26). In this context, fear of the Lord corresponds approximately to what we would call religious devotion. That is why it can be taught: "Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you fear of the Lord" (Psalm 34:12). "Teaching fear of the Lord" does not at all mean to awaken fears, but rather to teach prayers and the commandments, to initiate someone into a life of trust in God. "You who fear the Lord, trust in him" (Sirach 2:8).

When we recognize how the Bible uses the word "fear," we can translate it in many cases by "worship" or "love," and translate "fear of the Lord" by "faithfulness."

Can fear of the Lord still mean anything for us today?

The current unwillingness to speak of fear of God is certainly justified, insofar as the language of fear has clouded over the fact that God is love. To avoid this danger, as far as possible another vocabulary is employed. Nonetheless, in both Testaments, there are passages where fear of the Lord is the key expression that cannot easily be replaced.

According to the prophet Isaiah, the fear of God eliminates the fear of human beings. "This was how the Lord spoke to me when his hand took hold of me and he taught me not to follow the path of this people, saying, 'Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy; do not dread what they dread, have no fear of that. The Lord your God you will proclaim holy, him you will dread, him you will fear.'" (8:11-13). It is obvious that Isaiah is calling for courage and trust, but he calls that trust dread and fear! This is a rhetorical expression, but it is also more than that. Isaiah knows that fear is uncontrollable. So it is as if he was saying, "You are unable not to fear. Well then, fear God! Focus on God all the energy that animates your fear." This fear of God that absorbs all other fears is not easy to define, but it is certainly the source of a great inner freedom.

Shortly afterwards in the book of Isaiah, fear of the Lord is a charisma of the Messiah: "On him will rest the Spirit of the Lord: the spirit of wisdom and insight, the spirit of counsel and power, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2). Fear of the Lord is a gift of the Holy Spirit, just as much as wisdom and power! This gift can also be called humility. Fearing the Lord means recognizing God as the source of all good. This attitude of transparency was at the heart of Jesus' life: "I do nothing of my own accord. [...] It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works" (John 8:28 & 14:10).

The apostle Paul wrote, "With fear and trembling work out your salvation, remembering that God is the one who operates in you both the will and the operation" (Philippians 2:12-13). Since Paul affirms that salvation comes from faith, "working out salvation with fear and trembling" must be an aspect of faith. Faith is not a facile assurance, but a "trembling" trust, a trust that is alive, surprised, vigilant. Our salvation is a miracle that God "operates in us," and that is why we must be fully attentive to it. "Working with fear and trembling" means becoming aware that every instant is an encounter with God, for God is at work in us at every moment.

"Fearers of God, praise him; all the race of Jacob, honor him; revere him, all the race of Israel!" (Psalm 22:24). The progression of the verbs is surprising: "praise, honor, revere the Lord"! Here, fear is prayer that has reached the point where it no longer knows what to say: praise that has become astonishment, silence and love.



# SEPTEMBER

## MEDITATING ON THE WORD

**5 SUN** Lk 14:27-33 Jesus said: Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

**6 Mon** 1 Jn 4:7-11 This is love: not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent his Son for the forgiveness of our sins.

**7 Tue** Na 1:7-8 God is better than a fortress in time of trouble. He protects those who take refuge in him, even in a rushing flood.

**8 Wed** Mt 1:18-23 The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

**9 Thu** Rm 8:28-30 Paul writes: In all things God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose.

**10 Fri** Pr 23:15-19 Let your heart remain constant in the adoration of God; for there is a future and your hope will not come to nothing.

**11 Sat** Mt 6:25-34 Jesus said: Seek first God's kingdom and his justice, and all other things will be given you in addition.

**12 SUN** 1 Tm 1:12-17 Paul writes: Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and I myself am the greatest of them.

**13 Mon** Is 43:1-4a Thus says God who created you: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are mine.

**14 Tue** 2 Co 13:11-13 Paul writes: Live in joyfulness. Encourage one another. Be of one mind and live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

**15 Wed** Jr 20:7-9 Jeremiah said: The word of the Lord has brought insult and derision upon me. And so I said to myself, "I shall not think about him, I shall no longer speak in his name." But there seemed to be a burning fire in my heart, which I could not contain.

**16 Thu** Rm 15:1-7,13 St. Paul writes: We should not try to please ourselves, but consider what is good for our neighbours and so build up our community.

**17 Fri** Sl 27:30-28:7 Forgive your neighbour any wrongs. For if someone nurses anger against another, how can they then ask for healing from God?

**18 Sat** 1 Jn 3:14-20 Let us not love just with words and in speech, but with actions and in truth.

**19 SUN** Lk 16:1-13 Jesus said: No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

**20 Mon** Mt 5:14-16 Jesus said: You are the light of the world. Let your light shine in people's sight, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

**21 Tue** Mt 9:9-13 St MATTHEW As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

**22 Wed** 1 P 4:7-11 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

**23 Thu** Ep 3:2-6 Paul writes: The mystery of Christ is that all peoples now share the same inheritance, being members of one body, and having received the same promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel.

**24 Fri** Rm 8:1-11 The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

**25 Sat** Rv 3:20-22 The Risen Christ says: I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.

**26 SUN** 1 Tm 6:11-16 Paul writes to Timothy: Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called.

**27 Mon** Ws 6:12-16 The wisdom of God is readily seen by those who love her. Those who seek her will find.

**28 Tue** Sl 14:1-6,14-16 Happy are those who are not in anguish over their failings. For if a person is hard upon themselves, to whom will they be kind?

**29 Wed** Mt 16:24-26 Jesus said: If anyone wants to follow me, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

**30 Thu** Ep 4:1-6 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you have all been called to one hope.

Christ Jesus, we are seeking your gaze. It comes to dispel the pain of our hearts. And you tell us, "Don't worry; even if I am invisible, I am always with you."

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.



Holy Spirit, you open us to this Gospel reality: a love that forgives, to such an extent that nothing is disastrous except to lose the spirit of mercy.

**3 SUN** 2 Tm 1:6-14 Paul writes: Hold to the sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

**4 MON** 1 S 16:1-13 The Lord said to Samuel: Take no notice of appearance. God does not see as human beings see: they look at appearances but God looks at the heart.

**5 TUE** Mt 13:31-33 Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with a large amount of flour until the whole thing rose.

**6 WED** Lk 12:22-31 Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life. Can any of you, by worrying about it, add a single moment to the length of your life?

**7 THU** Dt 32:8-11 God finds his people in the desert, in a barren wasteland. God shields them and cares for them, guarding them as the apple of his eye.

**8 FRI** Ps 34 Those who fix their eyes on God will become radiant; shame will no longer cloud their faces.

**9 SAT** Rm 12:3-13 Be joyful in your hope, steadfast in hardship, faithful in prayer. Be always ready to offer hospitality.

**10 SUN** Lk 17:11-19 To the Samaritan who returned to thank Jesus for healing him, Jesus said: Rise and go. Your faith has saved you.

**11 MON** Sl 2:1-11 If you want to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast. Do not be alarmed by adversity, but attach yourself to the Lord and do not leave him.

**12 TUE** Jn 15:9-17 Jesus said to his disciples: You did not choose me. No, I chose you.

**13 WED** Rm 15:7-13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**14 THU** Rm 10:11-13 Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

**15 FRI** Lk 12:49-53 Jesus said: I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!

**16 SAT** 1 Co 1:4-9 God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

**17 SUN** Lk 18:7-8 Jesus said: Will not God bring about justice for those who cry out to him day and night?

**18 MON** St LUKE Lk 10:1-9 The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

**19 TUE** Mk 4:26-29 Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A person scatters seed on the land. Night and day the seed sprouts and grows, they know not how.

**20 WED** Mt 25:31-40 Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

**21 THU** Ps 84 Happy are those who find their strength in you, Lord. As they pass through the valley of tears they make it a place of living springs.

**22 FRI** Heb 2:5-18 Because Christ himself suffered when he was put to the test, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

**23 SAT** Jn 12:35-36 Jesus said to his disciples: Believe in the light so that you may become children of light.

**24 SUN** Lk 18:9-14 In a parable, Jesus said that the one who prayed saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner", went home forgiven.

**25 MON** Rv 2:8-11 The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

**26 TUE** Lk 6:27-35 Jesus said: Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

**27 WED** Ps 105:1-5 Seek God and his strength, seek God's face at all times. Remember the wonders God has done.

**28 THU** Rm 12:14-18, 21 Do not repay evil with evil. Seek to do what is regarded as good by all. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

**29 FRI** Ps 23 You guide me, Lord, on paths of righteousness. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

**30 SAT** Ga 5:13-14 You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom for self-indulgence but to serve one another in love.

**31 SUN** Lk 19:1-10 Jesus said: The Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

# OCTOBER

## MEDITATING ON THE WORD



There are Bible passages that sum up, in a few lines, a powerful and essential teaching. One of these is found in the seventh chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. Speaking to the assembly of the people of Israel, Moses tells how God "set his heart" on them and "chose" them. God "redeemed" them from slavery and will continue to love those who "love him and keep his commandments."

To "set one's heart on" and "choose" someone means uniting our life to theirs. It means sharing someone's fate because we want what is good for them, because their future matters to us. What has motivated this concern of God's, says Moses, is love, a love that looks beyond outward appearances, for Israel was not a powerful or prestigious nation but rather an unimpressive one, "the smallest of all," says the text.

"To redeem": God showed his love by turning their destiny around, by an act of liberation. At a time when this people should have disappeared in the twists and turns of history, its life was suddenly transformed and it was liberated. Moses says that by doing this God "kept the oath which he swore to your ancestors" (v. 8), a reference to the Book of Genesis and to the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This love is not a passing fancy. It is something lasting; it remains faithful.

"To love God and keep his commandments." For true love to be possible, there must be reciprocity. God's love calls for a response. According to Moses, this response has two aspects. On the one hand it means "loving God"—being loved by God leads us to recognize what love is and to love in return the living Wellspring of all love, God himself. And secondly, it means "keeping his commandments"—letting God love us leads us to love others, to love them as God loves. In the Bible, the calls to love God and to love others will always be linked, as they are in this text, in the memory of a precarious nation that nonetheless was loved and saved. God's love is recognized first and foremost by our attitude towards the weak, towards those who are defenceless.

- In what events and people can I see signs of God's liberating activity?
- Where can we recognize God's love in our life? How does that love grow in us?
- Who is "weak" or "defenceless" around me, among my family and friends, in my neighbourhood?

"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, who were casting their net into the sea..." (Mark 1:16). A few simple words to describe Jesus' activity, but what activity! Jesus does not give people an appointment elsewhere. He goes right to where people are busy working and earning their living. And from the beginning, he finds people ready to walk with him and share his life. Through them God's Reign, announced by Jesus in the previous verses, begins to take flesh. People seem to be waiting for Jesus: these first disciples get up and follow him at once. Everything is simple. At the same time, there is a surprising boldness that the story allows us to glimpse: Jesus dares to call them, and they dare to respond. "How is that possible?" we may ask.

Who is this Jesus, and what can link him to these men? And again, what is there between him and us? The following passage (1:21-22) describes a kind of authority that emanates from him. To try and figure out his mystery, others come to Jesus to question him (2:18). Later, the disciples themselves ask openly, "Who is this person?" (4:41). Different rumours spread concerning him (6:14-16). In the Gospel, different words are used to describe who he is, as if just one word could not say everything about him. He is called "God's Holy One" (1:24), or "the Lord" (7:28). What a mystery there is in this man who seems to come from somewhere else but who is right there and who "passes by" in the midst of others! The disciples will remain marked by this. They will not be taken out of the life of the world but led back to it in an even more involved manner. They will be broadened and transformed in their encounter with Jesus, and their relationship to others will change. Jesus said to these fishermen on the shore of the lake, "Come with me and I will make you fishers of people."

Jesus is there not to stand out but to bring together. He is there to open up, with those who follow him, a large space of life where all, those close by and those far off, can find the open arms of God.

- What impressions does this Gospel story suggest to me? What strikes me the most about it?
- Where do we see simplicity and daring in our life as we walk with Jesus?
- By what signs can we recognize those who, close by or far off, live as followers of Jesus?

## Ukraine

### The Joy of the Resurrection

During a recent visit to Ukraine by one of the brothers the greeting and reply was the same everywhere: "Christ is risen - He is truly risen!" At the end of April and beginning of May, the two-week visit included Kiev, the capital, the big port city of Odessa in the south and the western region of Ukraine. This year the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches all celebrated Easter on the same date and several people remarked how important it was for them to know that they were all celebrating the most important event in the Christian calendar together. The joy of the Resurrection is tangible in the Eastern Church liturgy. On the second Sunday after Easter there was an Orthodox Mass in a church in a large village 30 km from Kiev. The Gospel reading told of the visit of the women to the empty tomb and the announcement to them that Jesus had risen from the

dead. The priest explained in his homily that that was why, in the Orthodox Church tradition, this day was a special day of celebration for all women: a day when we remember that they were the first witnesses of the resurrection. After the service many of those present gathered for a picnic in the garden of the priest's small house in the village - a way of celebrating the first warm days of spring.

In Odessa there was a meeting with a group of young people preparing to travel to Taizé in summer. Only one person has previously participated in a Taizé meeting but it was clear that they were very keen to share their experiences with other young people from different countries. Given its history and its location on the Black Sea coast, the inhabitants of Odessa have had much contact with other peoples. After its foundation at the end of the eighteenth century, the first two governors were French; many Germans came to live there and there were also Italians and an important Greek community. There is

an Orthodox church which is still known as the "Greek church." There is also a parish that was founded as a place of hospitality for pilgrims before they took a boat on their journey to the Holy Land.

At meetings with young people in the western Ukrainian cities of Ternopil and Lviv, they too expressed the importance for them of praying together and seeking to build links with other young Europeans as well as with those from other continents. In that part of Ukraine in particular, they are very aware that the eastern border of the European Union now touches their country and they hope that instead of its being seen as a new barrier they can help build bridges from the East to the West. As in Kiev, several groups from western Ukraine are preparing to make the long journey to Taizé in summer. Many also expressed their wish to be present in Lisbon for the European Meeting at the end of the year - the 8000 km round trip by bus did not seem to be too great an obstacle to them!



# Bolivia

## Days of Reconciliation in El Alto

The city of El Alto is 4000 metres above sea level. Twelve kilometres from La Paz, the capital, it is a city of a million inhabitants, 99% of whom are Aymara Indians. The official languages are Spanish and Aymara. There are many young people, very present in the parishes. The young adult ministry is very active. During the summer of 2003, the bishop, Jesus Suarez, came to Taizé with the idea of a meeting of the pilgrimage of trust in his diocese. The meeting took place from April 30 to May 3, 2004.

By two in the afternoon on the first day, only one group had arrived, from Potosi. Then everything changed, with groups coming in steadily from all over Bolivia: Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Oruro,

forgive: there you enable us to find one of the sources of joy..."

## Faces from the Altiplano

The meeting was held in a school run by the Salesian order that stands in large grounds. In the school there is a large sports hall, 50 by 20 metres. During the days just before the meeting, the hall was decorated for the prayers by a team of young people. There were three very large panels, one depicting Emmaus, another the wedding feast at Cana, and the third the Trinity. All the faces clearly come from the Altiplano. On the Trinity panel can be seen the face of a woman. For people from the Altiplano, she represents the Pachamama, "mother earth." Above can be seen an Andes Cross, a kind of square stone cross with a sun in the middle. For local sensitivity, it represents God the Father. The panels were designed by



and a very large number from the Altiplano – the high plateau. Some, like the groups from Chuma and Titicachi, had travelled more than twelve hours. More than 150 people from Jesus de Machaca came in lorries! There were even people from Argentina, Chile, Brazil and the Dominican Republic. Volunteers from Europe presently working in Bolivia came as well. At 6:30pm, the bishop welcomed the young people, explaining why these days of reconciliation were important. During the days leading up to the meeting, people had been anxious because of the new wave of strikes and road blocks in various parts of the country. In October last year, El Alto was the centre of demonstrations that forced the president to resign. So for many the meeting came rather like a light kindled in the darkness. The papal nuncio read a message from Pope John Paul II, and a message from Brother Roger was read in Aymara and in Spanish: "In Bolivia, as in every country in the world, many of you know that it is not possible to move ahead without forgiveness and without being reconciled time and again. You want then to prepare yourselves to create trust around you. Together, therefore, we can pray: Holy Spirit, you live in each human being; you come to put within us these essential realities of the Gospel: kindness of heart and forgiveness. To love and to show it by our lives; to love with kindness of heart and to

young people trained by the Jesuits at the Fine Arts Faculty at Oruro.

## In Solidarity with Those Who Suffer

On Saturday, the day began with prayers in the parishes. In each parish, a team of young people was in charge. Afterwards, there were visits to places of suffering and hope, and to different voluntary projects. This was a way of expressing the fact that prayer and human solidarity are two complementary realities of faith. In the afternoon, at the Salesian School there were workshops on the Bible, the unity of Christians, the present political situation in Bolivia, ways of reconciliation, God's call to each one.

One of the brothers who helped prepare the meeting writes, "When the meeting was over, one of the priests commented: this is the first time in a youth meeting that those from the country and those from the city were actually integrated, without forming separate groups. In my parish I have been trying for fifteen years to persuade the young people to sing in Aymara as well as Spanish and they have always refused. But after this meeting, at the end of Mass, quite spontaneously, they sang one of the Taizé songs in Aymara!"

## Death of Brother Clément

Brother Clément died on May 18<sup>th</sup>, of the cancer he had been suffering from for several months. He was 68. Born in Switzerland in 1936, he entered the Taizé Community in 1962. It was in 1962, following the building of the Berlin wall, that the brothers began visiting young people in the countries of Eastern Europe with great discretion, so as not to compromise those they were meeting. Brother Clément was the first brother to visit Poland, in 1971. In all, he returned there on more than ten occasions, until a Polish brother who had entered the community in the meantime took over these visits. He forged numerous friendships throughout Poland. Through his presence at the "welcome" at Taizé, as well as in all his daily occupations, he was known and loved for his immense goodness of heart. He died in Taizé, as the brothers with him were singing *Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus*.

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